The Sounds of Silence

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The Sounds of Silence

by neunundneunzig

Summary

Jack drags Will up to show his latest protege what she's really up against. Will sees Hannibal again for the first time in years.

Notes

So I finished reading Silence of the Lambs and found myself yearning for an interaction between Will Graham and Clarice during the Buffalo Bill case. It settled nicely in the piece I had already established.

I went with book canon over show canon for Red Dragon for various reason.

I don't know if anyone reading the last two works particularly wanted this fic, but it's what I've written.

See the end of the work for more notes

Clarice Starling found her way down to the Behavioral Sciences unit again. She was hoping for a lead, and for Crawford to allow her the chance to chase a lead. They were considering sending someone back down to talk to Dr. Lecter. She knew she could convince Crawford to let her do it.

She knocked at his office door, opening when she heard the gruff, “Come on in.” From the other side.

Another body sat by at the desk in front of Crawford. At first she didn't recognize him at all, only seeing the tanned, slim build and dark hair. Then he stood and turned. Clarice fought the urge to recoil at his face. It was carved from the chin, through the mouth and nose. There were faint parallel lines crossing along his face, but they were far paler scars, and far less disfiguring. The stories that floated around the academy were descriptive enough.

She held her hand out with a polite smile, looking him dead on. He didn't looked her in the eyes, but shook her hand, “Will Graham. Uh, former special agent.”

“An honor to meet you Mr. Graham. Clarice Starling. Trainee.”

“Do I hear Arkansas?” He looked at her shoes. She wanted to hide them, remembing Dr. Lecter's comments earlier. She noticed his. Work boots, brown with a stain of dark grease. She could respect that.

“West Virginia.”

“Appalachia. I favor everglades myself.” He said, with a twinge of accent. She couldn't tell if he was mocking her or not. He sighed and offered her the chair he was sitting in, “I'd give you the other, but this way you'll at least get my good side. My less bad side. It makes it easier for us to talk.”

She regarded him for a moment before sitting. His honesty reminded her of Dr. Lecter. He slouched in his chair a little, “Crawford. I heard about Bella. I'm sorry.”

“Thank you.” He looked displeased and not thankful at all to be reminded of it now. “I'm going to give you two the room.”

Clarice was lost as Crawford left his office. She'd been given no reason to be called down here. She of course had a thousand questions for Will Graham. He was a legend. But nothing about him seemed like a man who wanted to be questioned.

“Do you drink?” He nudged the door shut.

“Sir?” Clarice didn't look at his face, for his sake. She wondered if his aversion to eye contact came before or after Francis Dolarhyde carved him open. From the academic papers that mentioned him, she thought it might be before.

He pulled out a metal flask, “Do you drink?”

She kept judgement out of her face, “I like to keep my head clear while working, sir. No thank you.”

“That bastard Crawford tried to show me the case file. That'll cloud my head faster than this.” He poured the contents of the flask into his paper cup of coffee, “And you don't have to call me sir. I'm no one, really. You know why Crawford called me in?”

“To help on the case?” She guessed, knowing it was wrong. There would have been a lot more noise if the man who caught as many as Graham did was working on this case.

Will laughed bitterly, “I'm retired.”

“You're here now s- Mr. Graham.” She tried not to wrinkle her nose at the sharp smell of the alcohol.

“I am, aren't I.” He gave a distant smile. It looked horrendous on him. “I’m here because Hannibal failed to kill me. Twice. Well...” He moved up, unbuttoning the bottom few buttons on his shirt, revealing a thick scar that wrapped around his abdomen. Clarice didn't have to be a doctor to know he was lucky to survive it, “Once decided not to. The other's a failure.” He gestured to his face.

“Dr. Bloom of the University of Chicago wrote an analysis on his mental state during the Dolarhyde murders.” She recalled, having read it earlier in preparation.

“Alana’s at Chicago now?” He hummed, “She won't return my calls. I think she feels guilty. A lotta people do. What did her report say about Hannibal?”

“He was trying to have Dolarhyde kill your family, not you, due to the past romantic relationship you had with him. It was done out of possession.”

Will grit his teeth and gulped his coffee. She knew at once it was a sore spot for him. She decided, for once, to press on, “I've been interviewing Dr. Lecter.”

“Why do you think Crawford has me up here?” He turned his head. She realized he did it purposefully, using his face as a means of intimidation, it was a cheap shot and she liked him less for trying it. “He's worried his latest protege is going to end up like the last one.”

“I don't think I'm at as much of a risk.” She kept her voice level, unphased.

“No?”

“He has no reason to hate me. He enjoys my pain, sure, but not because it's mine. Because it's pain.” She assessed Will Graham, “He gutted you because you caught him. He sent Dolarhyde after you for having a life without him. Besides that, he enjoys putting you in danger. It's about control for him.”

He was quiet for a long moment. Clarice worried she has offended him in one way or another. Finally his lips cracked into another asymmetrical smile, “If we had you working back then, we would have caught him sooner. Jack wants me to go down there tomorrow. Get a feel for him. See if he's planning on hurting you.”

She considered the statement, then shook her head, “Crawford wants to redirect his attention to you, so if he hurts someone...

“Lucky he didn't hear you say that.” Will finished his coffee, “I'm a bit of a regret for him. Shouldn't be. If I followed all the regulations, I might not have gotten cut sideways. Granted, we might not have caught him. And no one but Lecter could help Dolarhyde fucking up my face.”

Clarice studied him more. He looked at her and frowned. She dropped her eyes in slight embarrassment, “I don't like being anyone's subject, Ms. Starling.”

She was reminded again of Dr. Lecter. The tests he took just to make a fool of Chilton with. She could understand how Will and Dr. Lecter might find themselves together, back before the news was out about Hannibal the Cannibal.

“He asked about you.” She noted.

“Of course he did.”

“About how you looked.”

“Ms. Starling? Can I give you one piece of advice as you move forward. I know plenty of people have told you plenty of things about Hannibal. Especially if you've had the displeasure of dealing with Chilton. But I feel I've got some authority here.”

“Please, sir, whatever insight you have.”

“I'm not going to waste your time telling you what I think about him as a person. That's a rabbit hole, and very complicated, more with me than just about anyone else. And it doesn't really matter.” Clarice looked at Will's eyes. They stared somewhere at, off the wall and into the past. She wondered what he saw out there. He kept stoic, “I will tell you this. Hannibal isn't going to stay in Chilton's shithole for the rest of his life. He's biding time. But he's not staying there. Make sure when he gets out, he doesn't have any reason to give you a visit.”

“Yes sir.” She gave him a look, trying and failing to mask her concern, “Hypocritical advice, Mr. Graham.”

“If he wanted me dead he'd have made it happen by now. I hear he killed his cellmate just the other day.”

“Not cellmate. It was the cell next to him.” She nodded, “He thought Miggs was-”

“Was rude to you?” Will guessed, “Odd sense of justice, huh? But respect is important to him. Don't dare disrespect him.”

“No intentions of it.” She nodded, still struggling to not tack *sir* onto the ends of things.

“And after I talk with him tomorrow, I'll make the call of whether Crawford sends you back in. How important is this case to you, Ms. Starling?”

“It could make my career.”

“Not your career. How important is this case to *you*?”

She gave it careful consideration, “I need to catch him, Mr. Graham. It feels like the most important thing in the world. Like I won't get to breathe until we've got him behind bars. Catherine is suffering. I can't save the others but she's afraid and if I get this right, she gets free.”

Will looked down, a little bit of longing in his eyes. She knew there was no way Graham would work again, not after he lost so much. But she could tell he missed the hunt. He gave a nod after a long moment, “Then even if I wave the red flag, you're going to chase this. You've got my go ahead. Crawford's still going to make me see him, the bastard, but you're clear. Don't make me regret this. Be... Uh, be careful.”

“Yessir.” She nodded. She saw two versions of him now. One, the legend that he was. The man that apprehended some of the worst serial killers of their time. The other, a broken husk. The splinters and brick left of a house after a tornado. Clarice wondered what storms she had ahead of her.

Will Graham walked down the long, dark hallway. It had the distinct coolness of a cave. He wondered how exactly Chilton managed to achieve that. He'd never ask. The snide comments and safety briefing he got from the man was enough interaction. He felt bad for the trainee, Starling. Despite his ruined looks, Will could manage to see youth and beauty on others. He doubted Chilton could.

Worse yet, he likely came on to her. Will’s brow furrowed as he thought. She was far too young for Will to see in that light, should be for Chilton too.

He saw for a moment, the situation through the eyes of young Clarice Starling. She was smart, but not yet weathered by experience. Will wanted to tell her to quit. But he saw the look she had about her. He wondered how many years it would take for Crawford to break her. Once he had a good tool he used it til it broke.

He heard the voice before he rounded the corner. It was rusted. Will knew he wouldn't waste it on Chilton or the orderlies.

“My... You're not who I expected to see. But a welcome surprise.”

Will was glad for the direction of the wall. It allowed him to hide his face for at least a moment. He didn't want to give Hannibal the pleasure just yet.

“Do I smell cocoa butter? Are you trying to fade the scars? It won't help, not if the pictures in the tabloids are anything to go by. Come into the light, love, I will assess the damage.”

Will turned, showing himself. He burned with hate, then shoved it down. Hannibal wanted an emotion out of him. Will wanted to give him nothing.

“Such a shame. You were so handsome before.” Hannibal moved up, wearing the white jumpsuit, mandatory. Will studied his walls. All blank. Chilton punishing him for killing his fellow inmate, no doubt. He noted the man was paler, eyes a little darker. The years made some mark on his face, but not much.

Will wished for a moment, in the buried, emotion driven part of him, that Hannibal would be allowed at least a window. Chilton wouldn't give him so much as a crack in the wall. Will thinks he would bite off someone's face too, in such circumstances.

“You're very quiet, love.” Hannibal stood at the other side of the cell. His posture was strong, he studied Will's face, “Am I lucky enough to finally have a conjugal visit?”

Will looked up in disgust, half at Hannibal, half at himself, “Chilton won't give you a toilet seat, you really think he's going to let you have someone in there.”

“I don't think Chilton cares very much if you live or not. But you're right, he would never allow me any pleasure. I asked Starling to see about getting me a window. Have you met her yet?”

“Yes.” Will didn't give any more, suddenly reminded with a great sickness of their therapy sessions. This felt too much like one already.

“She's getting information on Buffalo Bill. Are you working? Hobbs took your sanity, Dolarhyde your face... I wonder what this one will take from you.”

“What did you take from me, Dr. Lecter?”

“Your heart, of course.” He smiled, almost kindly, “How's Molly? Or should I ask, where is she?”

“Washington. With her son's family.” Will knew this was a mistake. He didn't hide anything. Didn't give too much away. He knew what that would cost him. “Don't worry about her any more than that.”

“Looking far too tanned for Washington. She left you.” Hannibal gave a nod of approval. Will felt blood in his mouth for a moment. He hated feeling like Hannibal owned him, after all these years.

“We parted mutually. I wasn't going to see her or Willy get hurt.”

“Despite what our old friend Alana writes, I do respect her. She handled herself well. I heard she was the one to shoot the Red Dragon down. Rather poetic don't you think? A mother's care and protection early on would have stopped him from becoming what he is. Instead, it was what ended him.”

“I didn't come here to talk about Molly.” Will shut him down. He wasn't doing profiling any more. He didn't need to think about any of that. He reigned in his thoughts.

“No, you're here to talk about Buffalo Bill.” Hannibal smiled, “Ask Ms. Starling. My information is valuable now. It comes at a price.”

“I'm not here to talk about him either.” Will snapped, seeing for a perfect moment his hands slicing the skin from a young woman.

Hannibal smiled, “You're here to talk about Ms. Starling. No, no... Jack sent you here to talk about her. You've been played.”

Will blinked.

“But Jack expected you to think the way you used to. And I know you're trying your very very best to keep away from that. Jack couldn't smell that flask you're carrying. Couldn't smell the cheap whiskey you've got in it. High proof, low quality. The sort of thing bought by an alcoholic who's accepted their fate as one. Tell me, after a few swallows of that, does it get easier to look at yourself in the mirror?”

“Is that really what you've got for me, Hannibal? Low level taunts? A reminder of what a great nose you have?” Will moved closer, “Are you expecting me to be impressed?”

Hannibal regarded him, then gave an honest smile. It nearly shook Will, seeing it reach his eyes. It was a stupid test and he passed. Hannibal wanted to gauge for any fear left in Will. He wouldn't find any. There wasn't any left.

Hannibal didn't look away from him. There was nothing else to look at. “Who does Clarice Starling remind you of, Will? I want you to think hard. To think who Jack would want her to remind you of, with the hope you would give her some protection.”

Will closed his eyes. He'd been drinking before and during their meeting. He got played by Crawford of all people, “Abigail. Abigail Hobbs.”

Hannibal smiled, “He wanted you to guard her. And with that, the last thing you'd want to do is mention her to me, to the man who, in his mind, steals away every pleasure you have.”

“And thought I'd talk about the case instead.”

“Silently judging me to get what you needed to know about Starling. He is still protective of her of course. But he didn't think that I would see her the same way he does.”

“And how do you both see her, Dr. Lecter?”

“My dear boy, she reminds me of you.” Hannibal shook his head, seeing Will's face, “No, not like that. My attraction lies solely with you, and will until the day one of us eventually kills the other. She lacks your gifts. But you are very alike. Smart where you can't be as strong as you'd like. A pair of jackals. Perceptive, her not to your level. Pretty, or at least you once were. Both with a keen desire to prove yourself, to rise above. The cloud of whiskey may give you an excuse for a lot, but did you think I wouldn't notice how perfectly you ironed your shirt? It's very nice. I don't doubt one of the nicest ones you own anymore.”

Will waited for him to be done. He remembered their second meeting. Hannibal reading him, assessing the horrors he saw back then. He hated being studied. Hannibal knew this. He'd call

him on it, but everything given, he didn't doubt the man was bored, in his empty cell, no one to see but the orderlies and Chilton, the cell beside him still vacant.

“I do miss our sessions dearly, love. You should come by more often. I'm sure Alana would love to write a journal article on that. You know she feels dreadfully guilty about letting you near me.”

“I know.” Will pulled out his flask, not really caring about what Chilton would say. He hadn't talked to Alana since the Red Dragon case. He hadn't talked about Alana either and he wasn't going to give Hannibal the joy of playing therapist much longer. “So are you going to leave Starling alone?”

“Leave her alone? She's the one who comes to me with files and forms. Have you seen them yet?”

“Crawford tried to show me. I'm not working this.”

“Such a shame. But no, I will not harm Clarice unless given reason to. The world is a more interesting place with her in it. But I need something from you.”

Will took a long drink, “What the fuck do you think I have left to give?”

Hannibal smiled, “I would like a kiss.”

“No.”

“Don't worry, love, I won't bite off your lip. It seems Dolarhyde's knife did that for me.”

Will didn't know why he felt the urge to. He marked it down to the looming self destruction that haunted him since Molly left, “That's not why. You shouldn't even ask, you know they'll throw you in the jacket if you touch me.”

“Chilton takes great pleasure in deny me the slightest. I think this would be well worth it.”

Will swallowed. He eyed the walkway. The orderly wasn't immediately around. The camera in the corner was no doubt on, Dr. Chilton no doubt watching. He was almost sure this was a horrible idea. He set his flash on the ground, not looking to add the risk by giving Hannibal metal or alcohol.

Will paced up to the cell, to the narrow area that lacked glass, moving his face up. Hannibal grabbed his collar, pulling him close and giving him a brief, gentle kiss. It was not unlike the one he gave Will as he set him down to bleed out on the floor of the office. Will found himself returning it until he heard fast footsteps coming down the corridor. He broke the kiss, eyes soft. Hannibal looked at peace.

Will allowed himself to be escorted out. He took a taxi back to the hotel room, ignored the calls he got. Then, after being very sure he would be undisturbed, he took out the paper Hannibal had slid into his shirt pocket, and read it.

It was very clever. Will hardly noticed him placing it there. Anything sent between the cell conventionally, or in the mail, would be checked by Dr. Chilton. Will read the address Hannibal had written. He didn't see writing materials in the cell. This was a plan made a long time out. He considered his options.

“Riker said he saw Will Graham today.” Ardelia flopped down on her bed, taking a break from studying, “Said, and I quote, his face looked like a cunt.”

“His face doesn't look like a cunt.” Clarice huffed, “Riker’s just trying to be a tough guy.”

“You saw him?”

“Spoke with him.”

“What? And you're just now telling me, girl?” She moved closer, “Is he taking over for you with all that Buffalo Bill shit? He'll have the guy in an hour. No offense.”

“None taken. He actually came to tell me about Lecter.”

“Hannibal the Cannibal.” She grinned, “Did they really used to fuck? Could just be some dumb rumor, but some people say they fucked. Can you imagine that? Bet his dick nearly got bit off.”

“Get back to your books, Mapp,” she teased.

“Get back to *your* books, Starling. I'm not the one about to be recycled.”

Clarice smiled for the first time in a good bit, the stress of everything lifted for just a moment. She shut her book and grinned,“Eat a dick.”

“After you.” Mapp smirked, “So c'mon, what was he like? Is he really not gonna be working again?”

“Nah. Crawford brought him in just to scare me a little, I guess. He's worried I'll end up like Graham.”

“Catching all those serial killers? Not a bad way to go.”

Clarice sighed, feeling a little bad, “He thinks Lecter's gonna get out and do him in.”

“I mean, probably. That's how my dad got did.” She shrugged, “Put too many away, one of them’s getting out. And they come out with a grudge.”

Clarice thought of her own father. He didn't put any away. Just shot down on the pavement. Couldn't even get his gun out right before. The funeral was closed casket. She didn't want to think about how bad it had to have been.

Ardelia shrugged off her own bad thoughts, looking a little out of it, “That's why I bet they fucked. Graham killed Hobbs and the Red Dragon. And those are just the big ones. He

should've put Lecter in the ground. But you can't just kill someone you've been fucking, not unless they cheated on you."

Clarice thought of Will Graham, on his porch in Florida, drink in one hand, shotgun in the other. She shook her head. Will didn't use a shotgun. He had a .44 on him in the office. She was thinking about her dad again. She made herself give a thin smile, changing the conversation, "Yeah? You'd know wouldn't you, queen of fucking."

"Girl, I'm the queen of fucking?" She laughed, opening her books again, "Alright, let's go again. Big cases with the Fourth Amendment..."

Lecter got a deal with the Tennessean senator, through Chilton. He was going to be moved to her jurisdiction, so long as he helped get her daughter back alive. He was going to be loaded up on a truck, then a plane, and flown somewhere that didn't have the icy dampness of a cave.

Jack's secretary sent him an email as warning. Will knew Jack asked for it to be sent, but didn't have the time or energy to craft it himself.

He felt bad for Starling. She was so close on this one, just for Chilton to pry it from her. He knew, deep down, she would catch him. It wasn't wishful thinking. It was a gut feeling.

He wondered if she would pull the trigger. Expert marksman. She seemed like the kind of person Will could never be as a cop or a profiler. Someone who could pull the trigger on a killer and not get hung up on how good it felt.

They were all wrong about how they saw Clarice. She wasn't Abigail and she wasn't Will. Simplest line was she wasn't a murderer like either of them. He saw it in her eyes. She just wanted peace for the innocent, and peace for herself. It was a relief.

Will wanted all the small graces he could get right now.

He knew this meant he would see his ex lover again soon. He felt, for once, glad for Chilton's massive and horrible ambition. The guard at the facility was careful. He was weary letting Will in, and for good reason. He was kind to Hannibal, nothing but kind. He saw what he was, under his carefully crafted people suit.

The guards in Tennessee, and on the flight over wouldn't be so careful. It only took one mistake. And based on the fact that he'd given Will a meet up point, he was looking to get out soon.

Will wondered if Dr. Frederick Chilton would survive the week. A small part of him wished he didn't. Will didn't like to think of why the most emotional parts of him wanted what he knew Hannibal wanted.

He could warn Jack that Hannibal would escape. But he wouldn't be able to do much about it. Not while he was still drilling away at the Buffalo Bill case. And Will didn't want to be in a room with Jack Crawford while something like that was still going on. No. He wasn't getting involved.

Will took a long drink from his flask and plugged the address into his phone, immediately coughing.

It wasn't the alcohol that stung him, but the location.

His thoughts were jolted by the phone ringing again. He looked, thinking for a moment and answering, “This is Graham.”

“Will.” Alana's voice came across cool. He wondered how much older she looked now. If she had a family. She never reached out in anything but a professional sense. He didn't push.

“Alana.”

“You heard about Lecter.”

“I visited him earlier this week.” He played coy.

“About the deal. And Tennessee.”

“Yes.”

“What do you know?”

“That I'm fucking retired.”

“You've been drinking.”

“Wanna analyze me? Get in line. You're lucky, mines only half as long as Hannibal’s.”

She ignored the slight, “He's going to kill you once he's out. You need to talk to Jack.”

“Jack doesn't give a shit about my safety anymore. Besides, he's got this new murderer to deal with.”

“He has resources. Safe houses.”

“Hannibal isn't going to kill me.”

“Will. Really.”

“Kidnap me, probably. But not kill me.”

“Chilton told me about your visit with him.” Her tone was all he needed. She knew about the kiss. She disapproved, obviously, but was smart enough to know it was more than just a kiss.

“Chilton told damn near everyone. See the gossiping I could stand. But his attitude about me being gay? It's very-”

“You know why we don't talk anymore, Will?” Alana surprised him with her bluntness. He stayed quiet, not wanting to offend her with the wrong guess. If it was guilt, she wouldn't be the first to bring it up.

“It's because since the Red Dragon, since you lost everything but a pulse, every time I talk to you? You sound like him.”

Will grabbed his flask, “Why the fuck did you call now then?”

Her sadness was evident in the pregnant pause. He thought about asking her about herself. It would only make her uncomfortable. He let her mull over an answer, mostly so this conversation could end soon. For both of their sake.

Finally, she gave one, “We both know him. We know what's coming. I called to say goodbye.”

“He's not going to kill me, Alana.”

“I know. But I don't think we'll see each other again. No. I know we won't. I wish...”

Will closed his eyes. He didn't want to think about everything she wished for. He caught a glimpse of both of them together, on a porch on a hot summer day. Ugly dogs, strays no one wanted, ran around their feet, jumping up from time to time. She was successful. He was probably still retired. She was probably just as happy as she was now. Will would have been a lot better off. But that's not how life was. And he knew deep down he wouldn't trade his life for that one. Alana probably wouldn't either, even if it meant the redemption of Will Graham in her eyes.

“I know. Goodbye Alana.” He said softly.

“Goodbye Will.”

Will made a stop, before heading to the meet up. It wasn't planned, but he had to after seeing the news. Ms. Clarice Starling had caught and killed Jame Gumb, saving the life of the senator's daughter. Will knew such tales of heroism weren't always as sweet as they looked.

He found his way to her dormitory. It felt invasive, but he didn't know how else to find her. People pointed him the right way. It was evident based on just looking at him they knew who he was.

Will knocked and waited.

A tall black trainee opened the door. She started to speak, cut off, then started again. He got that a lot.

“Can I help you sir?”

“I'm looking for Clarice Starling?” He shifted, “Can I find her here?”

“Usually, sir. She's taking the search and seizure exam until 0930, then she’ll probably be at the range.”

Will nodded. He thought about his first kill. The need to practice after. All the shots it took to send down Garret Jacob Hobbs. He wondered how Jame Gumb went down.

“Should I leave a message?”

Will thought on it for a long while. He didn't know, in truth, what he had to say to Clarice. A congratulations would be thin, she'd gotten enough of those. Advice wouldn't stick. He knew she didn't have to worry about Lecter, regardless of what Crawford thought. He rubbed his neck, feeling awkward. “Are you a friend of hers? What's your name?”

“Yes sir, Mr. Graham. FBI trainee Ardelia Mapp.”

Will almost grimaced. He hated being at the academy for this reason. Too many people who he didn't know knew him.

“Good friend?”

She smiled, which answered his question well, “Great friend.”

Will weighed his words carefully, “She's... She... Take care of her, alright? This kind of thing can put a lot of stress on you. Just make sure she's got somewhere to go in case she finds herself somewhere dark.”

Ardelia listened carefully, absorbing it. Will was grateful. He didn't know if she listened out of true care or out of respect for him. He detected a bit of both. He felt his words were really being heard and understood. They were important. He knew first hand.

He wasn't going to let someone else go down his path. That darkness was now his alone.

End Notes

Changed it recently to explicitly tag Ardelia and Clarice because they're lovers. I just read the end of Hannibal (novel) and I'm furious at and done with all straight writers, but especially Thomas Harris.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!